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### Grimoire Vol. 21 Spring 1991

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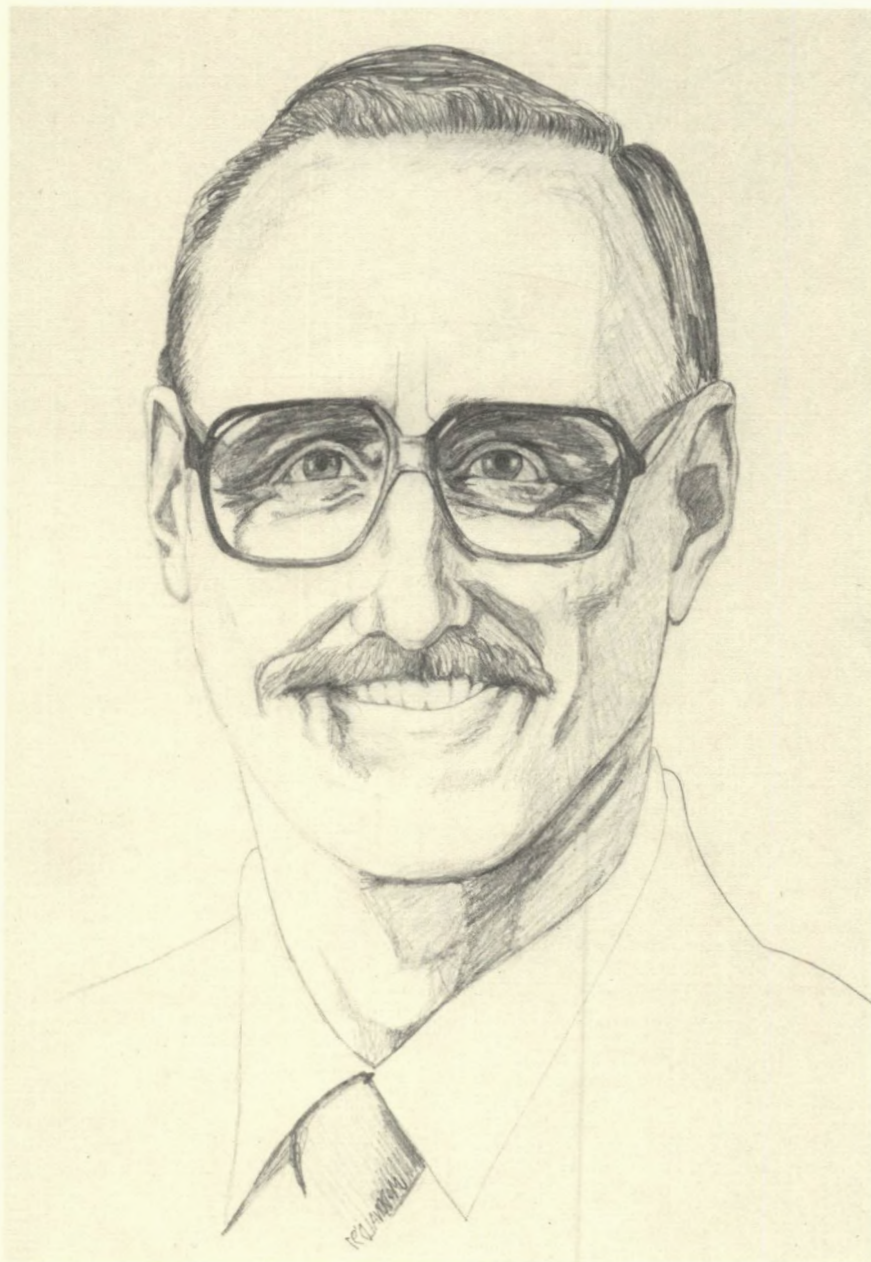
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# Grimoire

La Salle University

Volume 21, Spring 1991

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## Dr. Richard Lautz (1935—1991)

"Look at that tree out there." Dr. Richard Lautz's freshman literature class turned to look out the window of Olney 126. It was early in the semester and the crab apple tree stood bare and seemingly lifeless in the chilly February morning air. "Those branches are barren now," he explained, "but in a few weeks they will be covered with beautiful white blossoms."

Dr. Lautz was trying to tell us something about ourselves that morning. He wanted us to realize how quickly time passes—freshman year, our college careers, our lives. But he also was telling us about our potential. He honestly believed that we would accomplish wonderful things. More importantly, he had the natural ability to help us believe in ourselves.

But, if we are the blossoms, then Dr. Lautz has served as one of the branches which supports us, and nurtures that potential. He served in this role for the entire La Salle community, past *Grimoire* staffs, and everyone with whom he came into contact. For these and other reasons, we would like to dedicate this edition of the *Grimoire* to his memory. I hope that the effort of those involved and the quality of the submissions within these pages reflect the potential and the spirit he saw in all of us.

It is Spring again, and if you look out the window of Olney 126, you will see that the tree is once again in bloom.

*Valerie J. Lawfer*

We would like to welcome you to the 21st edition of the *Grimoire*. This year we implemented a new process for the evaluation and selection of submissions. We opted to utilize a Literary Board that would be involved in evaluating, discussing, and ultimately voting on the over 160 contributions we received. Throughout the entire process, the authors of the submissions remained unknown to both the staff and the board, and we hope that this new process justly represents the talent of La Salle's students.

We would like to thank the fourteen board members for their time, dedication, and input in this endeavor. We would also like to recognize our staff members for their help with publicity, typing, and evaluations.

Other people deserving our gratitude are Mr. John Keenan, Mr. Joseph Meredith, the *Collegian*, La Salle's Desktop Publishing Center, Garrison Printing, and Cherry Snyder.

The *Grimoire* commissioned Jim McDonald, one of La Salle's students, to do the portrait of Dr. Lautz for the cover, and we thank him for his time and effort.

In addition, we give special thanks to Bro. Daniel Burke, Dr. Jim Butler, Dr. Patricia Haberstroh, Prof. Cary Holladay, and Dr. Stephen Smith. These faculty members had the difficult task of selecting the "best" short story and poem for the new *Grimoire Fiction Award* and the *Richard Lautz Memorial Poetry Award*.

And our sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Toni Culjak, our moderator, for her guidance and support.

Valerie J. Lawfer  
Kathleen Hohenleitner  
Beth Anne McSherry

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## **An Image of Me**

Everyone thinks I am  
Violet.

Just an ordinary color  
Perched passively next to indigo  
At the end of the rainbow.

But little does everyone know

I am fiery

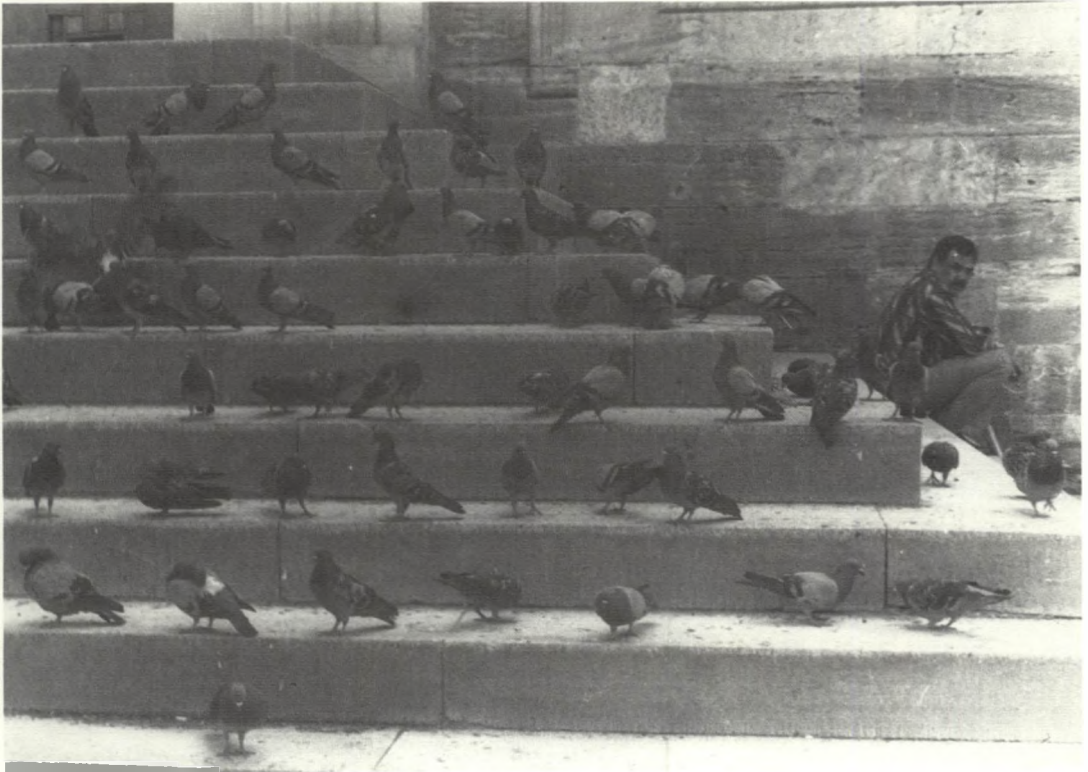
Red

And the beginning

Not the end.

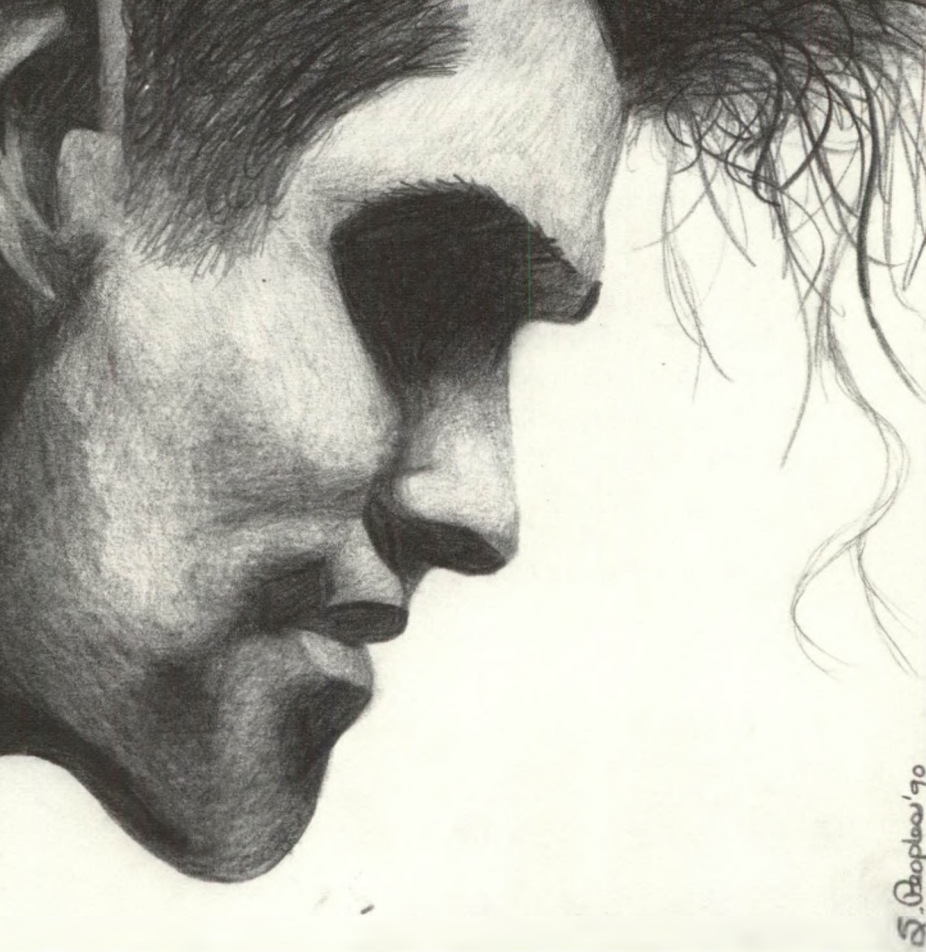
— *Maura Daly*

## **Resting on the Mosque Steps**



— *Virma Ugras*





— *Sandra Peoples*

### **Miliaria**

In the hot summers  
During adolescence  
The sun erupts  
With a prickly sizzle of sweat:  
Welding its fiery atoms,  
Riveting the flesh  
With a smattering of sparks  
like tiny red arrows  
peeling off youth  
to a ripened skin

— *George E. Micco*

## **Gliding Gulls Upon Rotting Hulls**

### **Gliding Gulls**

sink down toward the rotting hulls  
fluttering, flapping, grasping  
the edge. Wings close, careful claws

step from side  
to side, aroused by the tide.  
Feathered pride seeking refuge.  
Fierce deluge, slapping waves ride

rocks now wet  
with salty froth. More gulls fret  
and flap away from storm-seas.  
The strong breeze, tight like a net

pulls their wings  
to tall sails, bold masts, bell-rings,  
which stand high in dry sand dunes.  
Crying tunes from gulls bringing

seashore storms  
ashore sound loudly, and mourn  
the close of summer weather.  
Stray feather drifts down from a

fleeing flock.  
The ocean's force slaps and rocks  
those almighty sea vessels.  
Gliding gulls sink toward boardwalk.

— *Marlena Ryan*



— *Virma Ugras*



## Storm

The north beckoned to the south  
and the south answered—  
rumble-angry, echoing timpani with  
its bass—to announce this evening's  
concert.

Branches at the tippy-top huddled  
together to protect them from  
the onslaught, and then turned to  
watch the jeans that danced fadingly  
on the line from which even the strongest  
gust could not free them.

The north and south  
in a round of percussion instruments,  
increased tempo—signaling the  
light show to begin.

"Drum roll, please."

Jeans—first light then dark, now light  
kicked and struggled against their  
clothes pin captors. T-shirts joined  
the chorus line, partnering the prisoners—  
longing to fly off together into the  
branches of the cowering, huddling trees.  
The strobe lights, a few seconds out of sync  
with the drums, shocked their way into the  
horizon.

And, suddenly, burstingly it was there:  
The applause—beating itself upon the ground  
and into the frenzied dancers.

— Valerie J. Lawfer

# Miss Martindale

*Lindamarie Sands*

---

Miss Martindale was old, older than I ever knew, older than I am now. She was tall, thin, almost spindly. Steel gray eyes peered over her silvered wire frames down that long and perfectly straight nose. Her nose was rarely off its Roman perfection. It would wrinkle slightly when an unsavory odor wafted from the canal, then quickly smooth in obedience to Martindale discipline. Even her hair huddled beneath her Queen Mary hat, cowering rather than curling. I sympathized with her hair, bound up with pins and hidden beneath a mass of felt and feathers.

Miss Martindale was never referred to by her Christian name or by a familiar "Marty." Her smile, such that it was, seemed to freeze any such nonsense from the people who greeted her. A curt "Good evening" or "Good afternoon, Miss Martindale" was sufficient conversation. Even the pastor was only allowed to shake her hand once on Easter and another time at Christmas. If she was feeling benevolent, Miss Martindale would comment upon the sermon. At such times, the pastor would express such joy and fulfillment as if he had just been given an archbishopric.

I had heard it spoken in hushed whispers about the coffee table that Miss Martindale had been a famous beauty, the sort that would appear in the society pages. Young men used to assemble themselves beneath her window for nightly serenades. But when the story continued, the voices would get softer, as mother looked up from her cup to see me playing with my animal print blocks. I then felt that I was on the verge of learning a great secret. "Not in front of the child," her friend would reprimand, shaking her feline claws. She would then grace me with a condescending look that was meant to be kind, but which I knew expressed irritation. Another blurted, "You mean, she doesn't know? But she is Roger's..." The other voices hushed her, while she crumbled before their knowing looks.

My mother then would frown and assume her company voice. With the sweetest of all smiles, she would say, "Rebecca honey, why don't you build your castle in the sunlight, so your people can enjoy the lovely weather?" Her friends would stare at me until I picked up my blocks and started to rebuild my fortifications near the window. The women's fingers would tap the cups or play with the company spoons, distracting themselves as they glanced through the window at the Martindale house. Then, they dropped their eyes, and the most prying would interview my mother again.

When I was small, I imagined that Miss Martindale was a beautiful princess transformed into a witch by an evil fairy's spell. I wondered who the bad spirit was that had shut her away in the great, dark house, leaving only the wind blowing through the chintz curtains as company. Not even a cat prowled her lawn. Her privacy was assured by great thorny rose bushes which caught any child who unwisely decided to trespass on Martindale property or spy on its celebrated owner. But sometimes I thought I saw the chintz shrug as I played in my yard.

Heavy shutters at night and thick drapes by day usually prevented any adventuresome soul from prying into Miss Martindale's affairs. But, on ragged summer nights, when thunder verbalized cracks of lightning, the windows of the stone tower were flung open to welcome the storm. At such times, I would sit in my nightgown at my windowsill, gazing at the spectacle

from across the street. I visualized cadmium flames leaping from a cauldron or a cold iron wand seeking to chain the lightning. I once believed that I saw a ghostly figure leap about the towered room. It was part of the spell on Miss Martindale and on me.

My poor ragged edition of Grimm's fairy tales with its torn leather binding provided a ready list of suspects in the spellbinding of Miss Martindale. I hoped that I could find the villain before the treasured tome crumbled into dust. Was it the bad fairy, the wicked dwarf, the evil queen, or some disturbed forest sprite who did the mischief? A malevolent spirit was surely at work when dust from the book assaulted my nostrils and sent me sneezing. I had the greatest excitement when I saw the browned letters spelling, TO MY DEAREST MILLICENT on the flyleaf. As reddish flakes stained my hands and dusted my dress, I wondered if the briar roses would soon wither away after the completion of one hundred years.

When I recall Miss Martindale now, I remember the musty odor of my book. The mysterious inscription tantalized my infant but ever growing imagination. I thought that it could have been part of the spell. I was too nervous to approach my mother or father with my theories. They would have laughed to see a solemn girl of seven declare that the most respected lady of our town was under enchantment. Only foreign princes, retired soldiers, helpful dwarfs, or shinningly good sisters would know the proper manner of dealing with sorcerers. I was none of these things, but I still felt that it was my place to learn the dreadful secret and rescue Miss Martindale.

During the passing of one summer to fall, Mam Mom Alton came to our town for the first time in my memory. Father and his Alton cousins bore her body into the church with mother and I trailing behind. I remained by the doorway as they gently laid her before the altar. When Mam Mom was in place the pastor solemnly intoned the funerary service, while incense curled up to the sky carrying my grandmother's spirit to God. Through the smoke I saw Miss Martindale, head erect, hat firm, but her gloved hands clenched a prayerbook. Her lips shaped words meant for no living person's ears. But, as her eyes focused on my dark-clad form, the name "Susan" escaped, sighing to the flickering candles. Miss Martindale left before the service was completed. Her head bowed down to mysteries that I could not comprehend. I alone noticed her singular observance of the passing of my grandmother.

I returned home to my windowsill and Grimm's fairytales with "Millicent" burned into the flyleaf. Angrily I inked in "Rebecca Clement Alton." Too many things had been revealed that I could not comprehend. I ran down the steps in search of answers. Too many people infested our house, clicking careful condolences at my grandmother's passing. Genteel men and women of Miss Martindalian age commented how incredibly I resembled Mam Mom or how "dear Roger" brought to mind her father's court room flair. I fled their papery hands and dusty memories, searching for my own answers.

I found my mother palely conversing with the woman with the catlike eyes. I ignored her distress, demanding who Millicent was, and why her name emblazoned my book. Her friend was shocked at my behavior, but mother shook her head, protesting that she did not know. She suggested that I ask my father, but he had carried his grief to his study.

The mysteries deepened one Saturday afternoon as I was playing pirate in the willow. I spied several people entering Miss Martindale's demesne. My father, dressed in a tan suit and carrying the battered leather briefcase which he always brought to court, boldly walked past the rose bushes, climbed the steps, and knocked on the door. I was spellbound as it creaked open, and my father disappeared into the enchanted castle.

I watched the door that had swallowed my father until mother summoned me to help with dinner. My father returned an hour later, weary and worn as if he had just fought a tremendous



battle. My mother clucked about him sympathetically, deriding that "old dragon who had never acknowledged us before."

Father protested, "She is in failing health; she has not been herself since Susan..." A hurried smile replaced the bleak lines as he realized that I was listening. "Is that baked chicken, I smell?"

After dinner, as my parents sat upon the porch, I sneaked into my father's office looking for clues. On his desk, I saw a form which read LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT. Below it was spelled in a large and elegant handwriting MILLICENT CLEMENT MARTINDALE. Knowledge at last. Millicent was Miss Martindale. Millicent was once a little girl who read Grimm's fairy tales. Millicent was named Clement as was I. Millicent was dying. That night a dreadful storm hit the town and uprooted the flowering rose bushes.

My father woke me up earlier than usual that Sunday. Together we walked across the street and ascended the steps into the house. A pleasant woman dressed in white answered my father's knocking and quickly admitted him. "Mr. Alton, your aunt is expecting you and the little girl," she whispered. Father squeezed my hand and led me to a circular stairway rising up to a room that I had only dreamt of.

On an elegant table lay an open scrapbook. As we waited for our audience, I gently leafed through excerpts from our local paper: clippings on my parent's wedding, my grandparent's silver anniversary, and even the little story on my winning the spelling bee. Beside it, golden roses bowed before a silver-framed portrait of a little girl. Her face was one that I had often seen before in my mirror.

"Roger, is that you?" a sharp voice queried from a mass of blankets in the corner.

"Yes, Aunt Millicent. I have brought my daughter Rebecca to see you."

"I had a daughter, once," the wind sighed from the corner. The other breeze stole the scent of the roses, and filled the room with their glory. An old woman with rose petal skin moved her blossoms to look at me. "How like Susan she is at that age. Come closer, child."

I was impelled forward. Sleeping beauty was quite awake, but time had robbed her of her loveliness. She grabbed my hand as if to reassure herself that I was real.

"Susan would be older than your father now, but she went away one night in a storm. Perhaps, I will see her soon." Miss Martindale leaned back into her pillows. I tried to remove my hand, but she grabbed it again. "She used to play in this room. When she was but a baby, he would pretend to be her steed, but he went away too. Remember, Roger?"

"They went before I was born, Aunt Millicent. My mother had just gone off to be married."

"I forgot. Father was so angry then. He never forgave her going. A Martindale is not supposed to forget. I have been a Martindale for all but seven years," the woman declared proudly yet sorrowfully. A glimmer of the old Miss Martindale returned. Her eyes, which were so like mine glittered. Gazing through the lacy curtains, she began speaking again partly to herself, partly to us, and partly to the lost years and the years yet to come.

"My sister was braver than I, she ran off to marry her true love, eloping out that window in the romantic fashion. Father made me swear to never acknowledge her or her family." My grandmother's sister painfully continued "I kept that oath until now. I regret it."

"Aunt Millicent, my mother understood and forgave you long ago." Father tried to comfort her, but the old woman pushed each anguished sentence into the clear air.

"After Susan went, nothing could keep my husband with me. Stupid pride forbade me to follow him. I was alone then. Father departed and left me without sister, father, husband, or

child." She turned her face towards the shadows. "I was not even allowed to kiss her good-bye." The nurse coughed gently from the doorway. "Mr. Alton, Miss Martindale needs her rest now." My father turned to talk softly with the woman, leaving me in the grip of Miss Martindale. Her frame shook for a moment. "I never even had time to kiss her good-bye."

I never knew if her last words referred to her lost little girl or to the sister who gaily sprang out of her tower, returning only to be lowered into Martindale ground.

My father gently placed his Martindale hand on my shoulder and looked at me with his Martindale eyes. "Rebecca, it is time to leave."

I kissed Millicent on the cheek. She sighed, her hand slackening as she drifted off to sleep. At least, I said good-bye before she went.

**N**ow that I am older, I look out my chintz curtains waiting for my Susan to come. She is bringing her twins.



— Jean Michelle Williams

## Listening To Hindemith

Listening to Hindemith  
was like  
watching the conductor's  
baton become a ribbon  
or several:  
a series of bandy  
muscle tissues,  
a dancer that the  
wind now tears from  
his hand:  
A freed pigeon—  
continuously it peels off  
yarns and yarns of  
music  
as if undressing  
itself to a wound  
that from which now  
emerges what appears at  
first to be a slow drop of  
blood—but which is  
merely the quivering red  
tongue of its nestling as  
it yearns with the crescendo—  
longing for the tonic that  
will bind and bridge and  
mend this agonizing song.  
But now—the gathering of players:  
the strings, the reeds, the brass,  
the sounds converging like  
a sphere of snakes in propagation  
suspended in the hollow  
of a cello.  
Again the peeling of skin  
the gradual disintegration of an arrow as  
it pursues its straight line:  
its long strands unreel  
and leave in the air  
the floating gray webs  
of an old woman's hair somewhere (we can assume) in a forgotten corner  
of Scandinavia where the yellow blaze of a dandelion in a square of  
collapsed grass offers enough to penetrate the gray stuffings of a  
congested sky.

— George E. Micco





— *Maureen Rich*

**veins**

curving highways; malignant veins of a nation  
red taillight corpuscles streaming  
carrying their toxic black oxygen  
poisoning as they flow  
through the varicose map  
of America

— *Jeremy P. Bushnell*

### Incantation

He sits on his God A'mighty back porch  
And watches the rain fall,  
On his God A'mighty back porch  
He watches the lightning add  
Splashes of color to the landscape—  
Electric color to the landscape  
And he rocks and rocks,  
Watching the pools run over into  
The landscape, listening to the  
Rumbles—the pots and pans dropping  
Of the thunder, the short order  
Frying of the rain—  
And he rocks;  
The cannon fires,  
the snapshot flashing,  
the bowing of the trees,  
The hiding of the birds,  
The cowering of the little child.  
"I'm frightened, Mama."  
"It's only the angels bowling, Darling,  
Go back to sleep."  
And he sits on his God A'mighty  
Back porch and rocks.

— Valerie J. Lawfer

## The Necklace

Caught by a look in a mirror,  
or by a memory  
as he links the chain around her neck.  
Sliding on the silk,  
shimmering—the golden pearls of summer days  
the beads of unforgotten hours caught in glass.  
And reflecting the summer sky,  
her face  
in a glass backed by silver.

Shivering, remembering, jarring his hand.  
They slip downward  
a few to be saved by knotted twine,  
a turning of memory in intertwined fingers  
the rest fall.  
She catches the pearly smoothness  
but allows the glass to shatter,  
then slip unnoticed.  
As he bends down to retrieve his chances,  
she sees him in the glass, Narcissus in the pond  
where waving grasses hide the pair as the clasp is undone.

Slippery, skipping a smooth petal in his hand  
then splashing  
Running through her fingers the pearls  
Outward ripples of the pool spreading beyond  
Reflected in the shattered glass  
That he stoops to pick up  
While she watches, fixing the clasp in her hair.

— *Lindamarie Sands*





— Bill Keenan

## **Lycanthrope**

Lying beside her,  
I realize love's a lycanthrope.

One moment a wolf tearing flesh—  
Howling ecstatic nocturnal—  
Is timid and sweating the next.

Fetal and sleeping,  
Helpless and naked sighing,  
It's shapeshifting now to black crow  
That picks at the nest it is building.

Within the eyes  
Black pupils dilate to three times  
Their size is  
Wide enough to crawl in and swim for an evening.  
Neither porphyric  
Nor mad,  
But healing as the loss of words,  
Exotic birds and panthers gnashing jaws  
That chew the skin where sweat beads on my brow  
And hair begins to tingle  
On my neck and my scalp.

Somehow,  
She's passed on this affliction  
And I've respect for beasts of fiction now.  
They exist not in their myths or  
How much truth there is to gypsy lore,  
But in this burst of strength and lust,  
The sting of touch,  
The want for more.

Waking this morning,  
I look over at the lycanthrope  
Wearing a belt of flesh,

Breathing as though it was normal  
To feast on another through sex.

Back turned and weeping,  
Restless, now screaming, crying,  
She alters her form to a woman  
That leaves after she's finished dressing.

— *Christopher Davis*

# Ferris Wheel

*Mark V. Krajnak*

---

As Toby pushed open the big metal door and stepped out onto the playground, he immediately knew it was summer. He could smell the asphalt softened by the beating sun, and the brightness of the day made him blink.

"Mr. Tucker, you have a good summer vacation." Mrs. Kerns, Toby's fifth grade teacher and the one he liked the best, called to him from a second floor window of the school. She always called her students "Mr." or "Miss."

"And congratulations on your report card. Do well in the sixth grade."

"Yes, ma'am. I will. Have a good summer, too," Toby said.

Toby walked home with a light feeling in his stomach. It was finally summer vacation and his mind was awl with thoughts. He rubbed his small hand over his newly-shorn head. The wheat-colored bristles were warm from the June sun, and he liked the feeling of the buzz cut on his palm.

After climbing the rotting plank-board fence which encircled the Tucker's back yard, Toby pounded up the creaky steps to the back porch. He was already pulling the report card, complete with his first ever "A"—in arithmetic no less—from the faded back pocket of his overalls.

In his excitement, Toby did not remember to look for the protruding nail. It waited patiently, keeping its head slightly above the peeling gray floor. The toe of Toby's canvas sneaker caught the nail flush and sent him stumbling.

As he sat on the green astro-turf floor mat, which had the word "Welcome" spelled out in plastic rocks, and rubbed his banged knee, the words from the kitchen reached his ears.

"How in God's name can you do that to me?" Toby heard his mother, Emma, say. Her voice cracked as she pronounced the last word.

"Aw, c'mon. It's no big deal. I just had one little dance with one little gal. No harm done," Curtis Tucker said. Toby had heard his father's excuses before.

"Curtis, there was lipstick on your shirt. Do you expect me to believe that that 'little girl' just kissed you on your collar and nowhere else?" Emma said.

"Emma, I was a little drunk. You know how I get when I go play pitch at Stanky's Bar. I drink some and I feel like dancin'. It don't mean nothin'." Curtis said.

Toby now wished he had accepted Jimmy Rooney's offer for pizza at his dad's bakery. Toby had already heard many of his parents' arguments, and this one's topic was not new. Usually, the fights occurred at night while Toby was up in his attic room in bed. The verbal punches would climb hand over hand until they reached Toby's ears. He always tried to bury himself deeper into his bed, but the words still reached their mark, just as they did now.

"Curtis, you're dancing with other women. God knows what else you're doing," Emma said. Toby could see through the screen that Emma was wearing her faded blue jeans and a T-shirt which read "What, me worry?" She was reaching for the pack of Newports which lay on the formica kitchen table.

"Don't you talk like that to me," Curtis growled, reaching the pack of cigarettes before his wife, "If I say I only danced, I only danced." Then abruptly, "I have to get back to work. The Wagner kid has his Chevelle in, and I have to have it done today. I'll be home late."

Flipping the pack to his wife, he turned and pushed the screen door open. As he did so, he nearly fell over Toby.



"Hey there, boy. How long have you been here?" Curtis asked.

"About a minute or two. Tripped over the nail again. I got my report card here." Toby brushed the porch dust from the seat of his pants.

"Well, show it here," Curtis said. "Good job, you got an 'A.' Listen, I have to go back to the garage now. You go in and fetch the lunch your mamma made. This weekend, maybe, we'll take Marmalade out and do some rabbit hunting. It'll be like a celebration for the good grade."

"Sure, Pop, whatever you say," said Toby.

Toby went inside where Emma had a grilled cheese and tomato sandwich waiting for him. The milk was cold as it slid down through the knot in his throat.

It wasn't until early August that Toby realized he and his father had never gone hunting that weekend. It was also then that Toby noticed just how little he had seen of Curtis that summer.

The bright blue and green posters were like a beacon, always pulling Toby to them wherever he was. He had read them so many times that he knew what they said by heart.

**"THE TIME IS NOW—THE FUN HAS COME. THE BASS BROTHERS ANNUAL SUMMER CARNIVAL, A COLOSSAL CORNUCOPIA OF FOOD, GAMES, AND PRIZES WILL SOON MAKE ITS STOP IN THIS TOWN. COME AND ENJOY, EVERYBODY, COME AND ENJOY."**

Cornucopia was the only word Toby hesitated on. Colossal, he knew, meant big, but he had no idea about cornucopia.

The pastel signs seemed to be hung everywhere Toby looked: on telephone poles and car windshields, in supermarkets and barbershops. Toby even saw the Oswalds' big, hairy sheep dog, Oberline, lounging outside city hall, a poster attached to all that fur. He's a walking billboard, Toby thought.

Toby needed no urgings to go to the Bass Brothers' carnival. After winning three stuffed bears at the ring toss game two summers ago and a new Swiss pocketknife there last summer, Toby had been looking forward to the event since the Fourth of July. Now, already three weeks into August, the time, like the poster, read had come.

The people from the carnival—gypsies, his mother called them—started setting up in the big open field behind the Protestant church later that week. By Thursday afternoon, the lights had been strung and all the rides and stands were in place.

Though it was not scheduled to open until the following night, Toby had decided to walk down after dinner, hoping he could get a quick ride on the merry-go-round or a free stick of cotton candy. He liked the way the pink wisps melted in his mouth and the grainy feeling that was left on his tongue. If summer had a taste, Toby always thought, this would be it.

As the warm summer sky faded into the soft hues of evening, the dust from the parking lot licked at Toby's pant cuffs as he made his way to the wire gate which served as the entrance.

Filtering among the crowd of workers still on the carnival grounds, Toby walked unobserved. He noticed many children around, some his age and some even younger, playing or helping the adults. Deciding they were children from the carnival and not town children, Toby enjoyed the fact he was the one seeing the carnival early.

The carnival workers bustled by him. The hands of some were dirty and grimy and their faces showed tiredness.

As Toby passed the fenced-in area which housed the Ferris wheel, he saw a man bent over at the waist working on the engine. When Toby neared, the man lifted his head and called to him.

"Hey, boy. You with the overall. Come here, please. If you don't mind none, I need your help."

Surprised, Toby walked over to the man.

"I need you to help me out while I get this blasted thing working," the man said. Stains of sweat encircled the armpits of his dark shirt.

After tinkering with the engine for a minute, the man said, "Hand me that wrench, boy." Toby confidently slapped the tool into the man's open palm, happy to be of help.

"There, that should do it," the man said, pulling a red bandana from the back of his work pants and wiping his brow. "Let's fire her up and see if she won't spin."

With that, he pushed a button, shifted the gear sticks and the Ferris wheel, lit like a sparking pinwheel, moved up and away from the two, higher and higher until it reached a point where, if Toby had craned his neck back any more, he would have fallen over.

After shutting the machine down, the man spoke. "My name is Patrick Vaughn Fitzsimmons, but my friends, like yourself, call me Patty. What might your name be, sir?"

"Nice to meet you, Patty. Mine's Toby."

"Well, Toby, thanks a bunch for helping me out," Patty said. "Sometimes I wish I had more than two arms. If I did though, I guess they'd have to stick me over in the freak show tent. Did you know that Toby means 'Goodness of the Lord'?"

"No, I didn't," Toby said, "Did you know that your moustache is curled up on the ends? How do you do that?"

"Wax, me boy," Patty said, smiling. "Wax. How about we go see if we can't get you a soda for your trouble, O.K.?"

Patty ushered Toby into a nearby tent. The air inside was musty and humid and it reminded Toby of the workshed in his backyard. Inside, the workers who had spent the day erecting the carnival now sat relaxing and discussing the crowd possibilities.

"So Toby, what are you doing here so soon?" Patty asked. "When I noticed you, I knew you weren't one of our ragamuffins."

"Just came to see the carnival," Toby said, wiping the root beer line from his upper lip. He was still wary of the man, and his mother's warning about strangers tripped through his head.

Patty said, "Well, this is the part many folks don't see, the setting up. They see the lights and hear the music and think that's all there is to it. Push a button and BANG—instant carnival. Fact is, it's hard work. We don't even know what town we are in most of the time."

"Chambersville," Toby said, "You're in Chambersville tonight."

"Well, that's good to know. Will you be back tomorrow night?" Patty asked.

"You bet, Patty," Toby said, warming to the gentle nature of the man, "I can hardly wait!"

"Well, just to make sure, here's a free pass," Patty said, pulling an orange ticket from his pocket and tucking it into Toby's hand. "Just tell ol' hoss at the front gate that Patty said it's O.K. You come back, you hear?"

"I will," Toby said, his smile widening. "I will."

**B**e back before ten o'clock," Emma yelled as he jumped off the back porch. She was stubbing out a cigarette, the one which lasted since the dinner fight with Curtis. Toby had been finishing his hot dog and beans when it started, and the two fought on either side of him, as if unaware of his presence.

It was already late in the evening when Toby arrived. There was a large crowd milling about, playing games or buying tickets for shows. The sweet smell of popcorn and candy apples mingled in the air, and calliope music blasted from large speakers.

As he approached the Ferris wheel, Toby almost didn't recognize Patty. Instead of the dark blue work shirt and slacks, Patty now wore black pants with suspenders and a red and white striped shirt. Around the upper sleeves were pleated arm bands. Patty had substituted a thin

bamboo cane and megaphone for the wrench and oil rag. His hair was greased and neatly parted in the middle while his moustache was still waxed to a curl on both ends.

He looks like a ringmaster, Toby thought.

The Ferris wheel seemed even more dazzling filled with people. As it spun, it became a kaleidoscope of colored lights, music, and facial expressions.

"Toby, me boy, how are you this evening?" Patty said, gently shifting gears on the big machine.

"Fine Patty. Think I can get a ride?" Toby asked.

"Come aboard and see the sights of Chambersville," Patty said in his best carnival-seller's voice.

Toby climbed into one of the big leather seats and settled in. The cool breeze smacked his face as the wheel turned at its even pace, in time with the music.

As he sat at the top, waiting for Patty to let some people off and some on, Toby looked out over the town. The street lamps were now on, and Toby could see niches of light escaping from nearby houses.

From high up on the Ferris wheel, Toby picked out his own house. Sitting on top of Chambersville this way, Toby found it hard to remember the fighting and the yelling.

When Toby stepped off the ride, Patty said, "Toby, my friend, it's time for my break. Can I treat you to a bag of popcorn?"

As they walked to the popcorn stand, Toby asked, "Patty, do you like what you do?"

Patty said, "Well sure I do. Actually it's a hectic life, what with all the travelin' around, not really sure where you'll hang your hat that night. But, all in all, I like it. This is my family now: the fat lady, the tattooist, the midgets, the other workers. They took me in when I was just a pup and made me feel welcomed. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Toby thought for a moment, then said, "Patty, let me come away with the carnival. I can serve cokes. I'm real good in math, and I can help set up stands and wash down trucks. There's lots of stuff I can do."

"Whoa, boy. Come with us?" Patty asked. "What would your mother and pappy say? I bet they'd miss a real fireplug like yourself."

"Aw, they're too busy fightin'. They wouldn't even know I was gone." Toby said, wiping butter from the popcorn on the leg of his overalls.

"Now, I know you don't believe that," Patty said. "Listen, when I started here, I was a tad older then you. I felt the same way you do right now. Then, after two months on the road, I called home. I heard my mamma cryin' and I even heard my daddy snifflin' in the background. They asked me to come home, and I should have gone. But I'm pig-headed. Here it is twenty years later, and I'm still here. I could have had a better life, but it could have been worse, too."

Then Patty said, "How about another ride on my Ferris wheel?"

"You bet, Patty," Toby said, "Send me up."

Later that night, as Toby walked home under a sky so black it was blue, he realized summer was almost over. School would be starting soon, and Toby was looking forward to math class and being in the sixth grade. Then it would be hunting season and maybe this year Curtis would take him along. As he climbed the steps to the back porch, he was careful not to stumble on the nail.



## An Exercise in the Spenserian Sonnet Form

O let me see your brightening eyes again  
The summer sky doth envy every hue  
That languishes in verdant orbs, and then  
Alights with mischievous colors fresh and new.  
Tantalus I stand, and out my reach is you,  
But stand I stretched forever for the chance  
To gaze upon your visage, and if you  
Would bend yourself a little toward romance,  
I'd sooth my wond'ring heart, and with you start this dance.

— Valerie J. Lawfer

### Catalyst

The spark,  
that starts the roar  
The feel of revenge,  
as they hit the floor.

The Catalyst,  
beginning of reaction  
Point of origin,  
movement into action.

Aggressive side,  
that we try and hide,  
from others,  
and ourselves.

Blood is boiled.  
Plot is foiled.  
And we can rest easy,  
until the spark ignites again.

You're never done,  
until the reaction's complete  
always come out,  
the same as you went in  
just there,  
to mix things up.

— T. M. Stasko

## The Hero

The relics of his lifetime  
Are spread on his backyard lawn chair  
Excavated from basement boxes  
They now greet the sun for the first time  
Since probably...

1946.

It hadn't mattered so much then  
Because everyone had just come home  
And after the homecoming  
It was all quickly forgotten.

His bars and stripes  
Postcards of Paris  
Engineer's field manual  
Its dogeared corners  
Brown with age...  
This was his war  
Or what was left of it.

Because every day  
It was further away.  
His lifestyle seems to mock  
His solemn memories—  
He now has eyeglasses  
From the VA,  
He teaches his daughter to salute  
In the hall mirror  
But she'll never get it right.  
And the other men he knows  
Just drink  
Until they can't remember it  
At all.

He won't ever be one of them,  
He thinks as he wipes the mildew  
From his medals  
And lies them to air in the sun  
For the last time for another  
Forty-five years.

— Mary Ann Buschka

## **Amongst Idyllic Hills**

Amongst idyllic hills  
I roamed  
One early day in June  
When the contagious green  
Spread out like an early morning yawn  
Along the open grounds and standing trees  
And even into  
Those tiniest knots  
Of twining  
Buds and leaves...  
When the streams and creeks  
Seep through fissures  
Like a long unraveling of tongues: licking  
Up soil as they sing  
A great wind out of the barrels of flutes,  
And the daisies shoot up  
Like proud umbrellas  
Tilted to the ground:  
Waiting for the climbing sun  
To lift the weight of dewdrops  
And feed them to the clouds  
Whose shadows  
Hold the bony hefts



Of the sleeping cows  
Along the slopes of these idyllic hills  
I sat by one small daisy  
To see  
A bee  
Zoom up! like the highest note a clarinet can reach  
And then descend  
To the low  
Ground  
To gather pollen  
In exchange for a sweet drink of nectar  
I came to love that bee—  
With its dancing legs  
And buzzing wings  
And its royal coat of gold—  
I felt I wanted to hold it  
And did  
With transcendent love declare  
“We are one!”  
“We are one!”  
and the damn thing  
drilled me  
with its electric butt.

— *Lemuel Gilbert McClellan*

## In the Bus



— *Virma Ugras*

## Eliot on Opium in Twin Peaks

Paint me a cavernous waste shore  
with a body lying upon the beach  
wrapped in plastic  
rapt in the unknowable question  
of policemen in briefs,  
asking, nodding, eating as if tomorrow would never come,  
donuts.

Hear the myna bird Screech  
Laura, Laura where are you?  
asking that is for another to do.

Let us go then, you and I,  
While Dale Cooper eats the cherry pie,  
like the mythic king feasting on himself.  
Let us go, through certain pine-filled wood  
to a cabin dark not good.

The velvet curtains hang in gloom  
while bowls of lilacs fill the room.  
She twists one in her fingers as she talks  
memorizing rejected walks.

Still the log lady comes and goes  
telling her log what no one knows.

In the shattered morn of hazy dew  
The sirens are singing from across the lake.  
The lady sits drenched under the Juniper tree  
for the river's tent has broken with the locket.  
Tereu.

Meanwhile the card smiles lazily, blinking its one eye.  
like Polyphemus searching for his nymph  
with draughts brewed with spirits in the cellar.  
But who shall spin the wheel at the still point of the  
turning world?  
Shall you dare to ask the question?  
Put your cards on the table. Cash in your chips.  
Sail across the lake in fancy ships.

In this decayed hole among the mountains  
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing  
in the voice of a dead girl over the phone.  
Niniane and the sword.  
Elaine is in the lake rather than Nimue,  
While the children wonder what to do.

I have heard the key. It is in a coconut.

— *Lindamarie Sands*



# The Little Painter

Jim Glass

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Tracy Campbell, a 28-year-old kindergarten teacher at the Fairmount School, shoved her way through the unruly crowd of neighbors who were swarming the Shepard's house. She didn't expect such a large crowd, but she figured they were there to see the Shepard's little boy and his paintings. She heard some of the people shouting.

"Those paintings are unreal."

"They're calling him a genius, Henry."

"Did anyone inform the *Enquirer* about him?"

"Does the boy do nudes?"

"Step aside...I'm a reporter...I need a quote."

As Tracy squeezed through the mob, camera bulbs flashed sporadically. After pushing dozens of people aside, she finally reached the front where a man stood before her with a camera. She grabbed the man's shoulder, causing his hands and camera to shift upward. The flash bounced off the ceiling.

"Hey lady, you just ruined my picture," the man yelled.

Tracy ignored him and looked at Billy Shepard, the amazing child who was enrolled in her class. The blond-haired boy stood trembling in a corner of the house while tears glazed his dark blue eyes. The tears rolled slowly down his cheeks, mixing with the dots of different colored paints which were sprinkled on his face. Patches of blue, green, and yellow were splattered on his Cowboy and Indian pajamas. His hands, nearly black from the mixing of various colors, were held above his eyes, blocking the glare from the reporter's tripod light.

Then Tracy noticed the walls around Billy. From the floor to a jagged line about 4 feet above the floor, the papered walls were now painted with brilliant splashes of color which formed distorted faces, houses, and animals. Tracy was mesmerized by the paintings until Mary Shepard's voice snapped her out of her trance.

"Please get out. Leave my son alone. Everybody please get out," Mary screamed.

Her pleas were ignored.

Then Tracy hurried over to Billy and lifted him up into her arms. He buried his face in her shoulder and pushed his hand under her long brown hair.

"Can't you see what you're doing to the boy?" yelled Tracy. "He's afraid of you all."

The people continued to shout.

"Does the boy have an agent yet?"

"He's worth a lot of money. I'll guarantee you that."

"Do you realize, Billy, that you are a brilliant painter?"

"Speak up my boy. We need a quote."

Billy cried hysterically.

Then an overweight policeman yelled above the noise of the crowd.

"Everybody out before I start issuing some arrests."

The crowd didn't budge. The policeman blew his whistle.

"Everybody out before I start taking you all down to the big house."

Tracy watched the people slowly filter out of the house. Many of them remained outside on the lawn and the driveway, talking and waiting for something else to happen. It looked as though this was the most exciting thing that had happened in this town in years, Tracy thought.

As the house emptied, Mary rushed over to Tracy. The whites of Mary's blue eyes were now glazed and streaked with red branch-like lines. Strands of blond hair poked out from the clump of hair which she had pinned up on the top of her head. Billy reached out to his mother and then lunged into her arms. He clung around her like a tight cotton shirt.

"Mrs. Shepard, would you like to file charges against any of these people?" the policeman asked.

Mary Shepard was still crying.

"No...Not now. Not at the moment. Thank you," she replied.

"If you would like to file any charges or if you need some more assistance, just give us another call." The policeman began to walk away, but then he stopped and gazed at the walls. "And Mrs. Shepard. Take good care of that boy. He's got some real talent."

The policeman left the house. Tracy watched him from the front bow window as he walked down the driveway. She heard him yell at the remaining people to get off the Shepard's property. Then he got in his car and drove down the street.

Tracy turned away from the window and walked over to Mary who was still holding Billy in her arms.

"I never expected anything like this after you called this morning. What happened?" asked Tracy.

Mary put Billy on the floor. He stayed close by her side, wrapping his arms around her left leg. As she answered the question, the words fired rapidly out of her mouth.

"It all happened so quickly. They just kept coming in. I couldn't stop them. And they..."

"Slow down Mary, and just start from the beginning. How did they get in in the first place?"

"My neighbor next door, Mrs. Crenshaw, knocked on my door and then took it upon herself to just walk right in. That's when she saw me wiping off Billy's hands. She asked to borrow a cup of sugar, which of course was an obvious ploy to get into my house. I got her the cup of sugar and she left. But then she probably called everyone in the neighborhood. Did she happen to call you?"

"No, I don't even know the woman."

"Well, that doesn't matter. She's not shy. She's the type of person who would open the town's phone directory, go down the list of names, and call to chat with people whether she knew them or not. I'm surprised she never called you. After all, your name is near the beginning of the directory."

"Perhaps I was out when she called. She did a pretty good job this time though. It looked like the whole town was in your house."

"Well, let me tell you what happened. Mrs. Crenshaw came back with a few people from the Fairmount Art Society. Have you ever heard of it?"

"Yes, I actually have a membership. But I only went to one of their meetings."

"You sound like my husband. He has a membership, but he never goes to the meetings either. He pretty much gave up on painting after Billy was born and he got that new sales job. He just didn't have the time anymore. Plus his paintings never really sold too well. Do you paint Tracy?"

"No, I don't paint. So what happened with these people from the Art Society?"

"Oh, yes. I should have known better than to let Mrs. Crenshaw in my house, but I figured her and the society could spread the word around about my son. So I let them in. But then, before I knew it, everyone was coming in the door. The house was mobbed with people in just a few minutes. The people were shoving and pushing each other just to see the paintings."

"No wonder Billy was scared."

Tracy pushed back Billy's blond hair. She wiped the remaining tears from of his eyes with her index finger.

"It's okay Billy. They weren't trying to hurt you," said Tracy.

Billy hid behind his mother's legs and remained quiet.

"Where's your husband?" asked Tracy.

"His job took him away for the weekend. None of this would have happened if he was home. He would have..."

A knock on the door interrupted their conversation. Billy's body jolted. A man's voice was heard outside the door.

"I'm from the *Fairmount Gazette*. Could I please talk to the boy for a few minutes?"

Mary and Tracy ignored him. The man continued to knock on the door and ring the door bell.

"I'll give you fifty dollars just to talk to the boy. I just want to write a story on the boy. I'm not out to hurt him or anything."

"Don't answer it. He'll go away before long," Tracy said.

"All of this just because of some paintings on a wall," Mary said.

"They're not just some paintings on a wall. It's like I told you before. Your son has some special talent. I couldn't believe some of the things he was painting in class. But I didn't even realize the extent of his talent until now."

Tracy stared at the walls.

"These paintings are amazing for a five-year-old boy. Most five-year-olds find it hard to color within the lines," said Tracy. She pointed to a face with long green hair. The face had a body of a four-legged animal. "Just look at the face and the different colors that he used. He has a lot of imagination."

"Yes, and he did it last night while I was in bed. I don't know how he could have gone downstairs, gotten the paints out of my husband's closet, and painted without me hearing him. It's amazing how much he painted in just one night."

The doorbell continued to ring. They heard the reporter shout once again.

"I'm not going to leave until I speak to the boy."

Then there was a tapping noise on the bow window. Mrs. Crenshaw and a few other women were peering in the window. Tracy walked over and pulled a cord which closed the curtains. The reporter knocked again.

"We have to do something. I can't stand this anymore. Maybe I'll call the police again," Mary said.

"Wait a minute. That's only a temporary solution to your problem. Maybe we can clear this up together," said Tracy.

"Yes, but how?"

"I have an idea that just might work."

"I'll try anything."

"I think we can get the reporter to believe that this whole thing was nothing but a hoax."

"A hoax?"

"Yes, I'm going to open the door to the reporter. Just and go along with whatever I say."

They walked to the front door. Billy stayed behind and played with his Ninja Turtle figures. Mary opened the door. A young man stood before them in a cheap, gray, polyester suit. He smiled, but it was noticeably fake.

"You've decided to take me up on my offer," he said.

He extended his hand to give the women the fifty dollars. Mrs. Crenshaw and the other ladies watched from a spot behind a waist-high bush.

"I don't think you'll be so willing to give us that money when I tell you the truth about the whole thing," said Tracy.

The reporter's smile vanished as fast as it had appeared. He withdrew his hand and stashed the bills in his pants pocket.



"What are you talking about?" asked the reporter.

"I'm talking about the hoax."

"The hoax?"

"Yes, the hoax. I'm sorry to tell you this. But you're an innocent victim of a hoax that was meant for somebody else."

"You're kidding me."

The reporter looked at Mary.

"It was all just a practical joke. I'm really sorry that you had to get involved in all this," said Mary.

Mrs. Crenshaw and the others inched closer to hear the conversation. Tracy lowered her voice.

"You see, we wanted to trick those old newsbags over there."

The reporter looked back at the ladies. The women stepped backward a few steps and looked away.

"They're always getting into everybody else's business. We wanted to have a little fun with them by making them think that Billy had been up all night painting the walls," Tracy said.

Mary laughed.

"Imagine that. A five-year-old boy painting all those pictures in one night. How stupid could you be to believe that one?" Mary asked.

The reporter's face turned red.

"Yes, especially when it took us days to paint those walls," said Tracy.

The reporter laughed along with the women.

"Then it's no big deal if you women painted the walls. But there is one last thing," said the reporter.

"And what's that?" asked Tracy.

"Do you mean to tell me that you ruined your own wallpaper just for a trick?" he asked.

"Oh...That's how we dreamed up this scheme. My husband and I decided that it was time to paper the walls again. We just took advantage of the situation," Mary said.

"So the boy had nothing to do with it?" the reporter asked.

"He did have something to do with it. We told him to tell the women from the Fairmount Art Society that he had painted the walls," Tracy said.

The reporter frowned.

"In my opinion, you people should be ashamed of yourselves. You told that poor little boy to lie. You used him for your own selfish needs. That boy may be scarred for life because of you," said the reporter.

"You're right. We are ashamed of ourselves. We never thought that it would go this far," said Tracy.

"Well, I hope you've learned something from this," said the reporter.

"Yes, we have," said Mary.

The reporter said nothing. He turned and walked back down the driveway. Mrs. Crenshaw and the other ladies gathered around him, but he continued to walk away.

"It was all a hoax, everybody. You might as well go home," he said.

Anger appeared on the faces of the women as they looked at Tracy and Mary. Then Tracy slammed the door shut and looked out the small door window, watching the women walk away.

"It looks like the plan worked," said Tracy.

"Yes, but you never know with Mrs. Crenshaw. She'll probably be pecking in my window in a couple of hours or so," said Mary.

"For now, you should keep his painting under cover. Then later you can call some art schools or someone who may be able to help you out. I'll be glad to help you with that."

"Thanks, but for now I'm just going to relax."

"Yes, relax and take it easy."

They walked into the living room where Billy was dipping his brush into a container of brown paint. He was working on a face with red skin and brown hair. Tracy couldn't tell whether it was the face of a man or woman.

"I can't believe he's painting those walls again after I scolded him this morning," said Mary. "He's a very stubborn child."

"Yes, I noticed that in class," said Tracy.

"I might as well leave him paint. It can't hurt anything now."

"So, Billy. Who is that a painting of?"

Billy glanced at Tracy. He remained quiet and continued to paint.



— Virma Ugras

it is  
it only is  
it is not the is  
but it is  
it is, is  
and it wasn't  
i thought  
but it was  
and it is  
and it is  
love  
love is, is  
and that's all  
it needs  
to be

— 1242953

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### **Nest of Hornets** **(Mock Sonnet Stung)**

The match burns. The grey plastic ashtray turns  
Into a furnace of expired lung  
And once tobacco. But scattered among  
The ashes is cinder. I'll never learn  
To determine which is burning—discern  
Which is or isn't love. I have been stung  
By a hornets' nest of nerves; and though young,  
My youth has been a burden of concern.  
So I'll strike wood, catch sulphur, and then drive  
Out pain with a smudge pot of words in verse.  
Smoke seeps in paper, disturbing the hive,  
Where love, an insect divine and perverse,  
Delivers a thorn that keeps me alive,  
But clouds my judgment of better and worse.

— *Christopher Davis*



## Little Boy and His Bird Seed



— *Virma Ugras*

## Being Irresoluble

Mother, father, why did you have me?  
Something I often asked in  
The blizzard of stocked emotions  
Why did you dare,  
Under the pretense of lightning,  
Carve an eye into a stone  
And leave the sunlight to  
Pour its banal fluids  
Inside  
Where the days pass  
Like kidney stones—  
Why!  
It was a question I kept about me  
like gun in holster...  
In the gray and mossy  
Mildewed wood

Just above a stagnant pond  
A bead of dew  
Grows swollen with weight  
As its sunken head,  
Reflecting in the pond,  
Finally falls  
And the water  
Spreads with echoing  
Deathbed whisper  
And the water issues—  
"I"

One night I dreamed I did beget a race  
And faced the judgments of descendants spread  
Across the future ages.  
A multitudinous jury  
Steeped in mighty civil fury  
For the cause and  
Of the cause  
Interrogating thus:  
"Was it the mere caprice of reckless concupiscence  
That led you to the act, or did you  
Actually see projections of your own unspent ambitions?  
Did you claim to hold the future  
In your thoughts;  
Or did you merely  
Drop a seed into a question mark  
Like a child throwing rocks  
Into unsuspecting windows?  
Why? Why!"

"I have always held that question by my side,"  
I say,  
"I have showered and dressed myself in it  
Each morning."  
I then had said what I have told you:  
That when you smiled at me  
And your teeth proclaimed themselves  
To that secret ocean of white on which  
Your eyes  
Like floats  
Quivered as I rippled their waters with my swim,  
That I imagined the weight of your hips  
As a house both roomy and warm,  
Warm with the scent of dinner  
Rolling its fingers into each bedroom where  
Children's thoughts lay among  
Pieces of silverware,  
Kitchen tiles,  
Laundry detergents,

And a row of shirts and underpants  
Tied to a clothesline,  
All in the stupendous carousel  
Of a conscience, a dead thinking  
Whose abstruse beauties  
So easily enforced its being,  
Held the stamp of its regime  
Maintained above the revolt  
Of this darkened question mark.

This was the grandeur of my vision:  
Only a playground for some rather  
Rammy genitals whose  
Flared nostrils,  
Iron talons,  
And thousand wiry, tendrilous tentacles  
Are dripping with such a sweat,  
Such a mucus  
That might transform itself  
Into the shape of a child's body:  
Fair and golden  
Like the skin of the sun—  
With arms crawling along  
A row of monkey bars.

Once I wandered into the bathroom  
After my mother finished her shower  
And left the dank and brutal  
Stench of her body,  
And perhaps some gas,  
To linger in the air—  
Some pieces of her hair  
Formed a circle around the drain  
Where they undulated grotesquely—  
    like the racing legs of a silverfish  
    or ingenious musical thoughts  
And so I have visited such quarters  
Of yours  
And smelled you  
Deep into my lungs  
And seen the hairs that  
Argued with the neatness of the house  
In the bathtub,  
Encircling the drain.

I shall follow them into the pipes  
And take root.

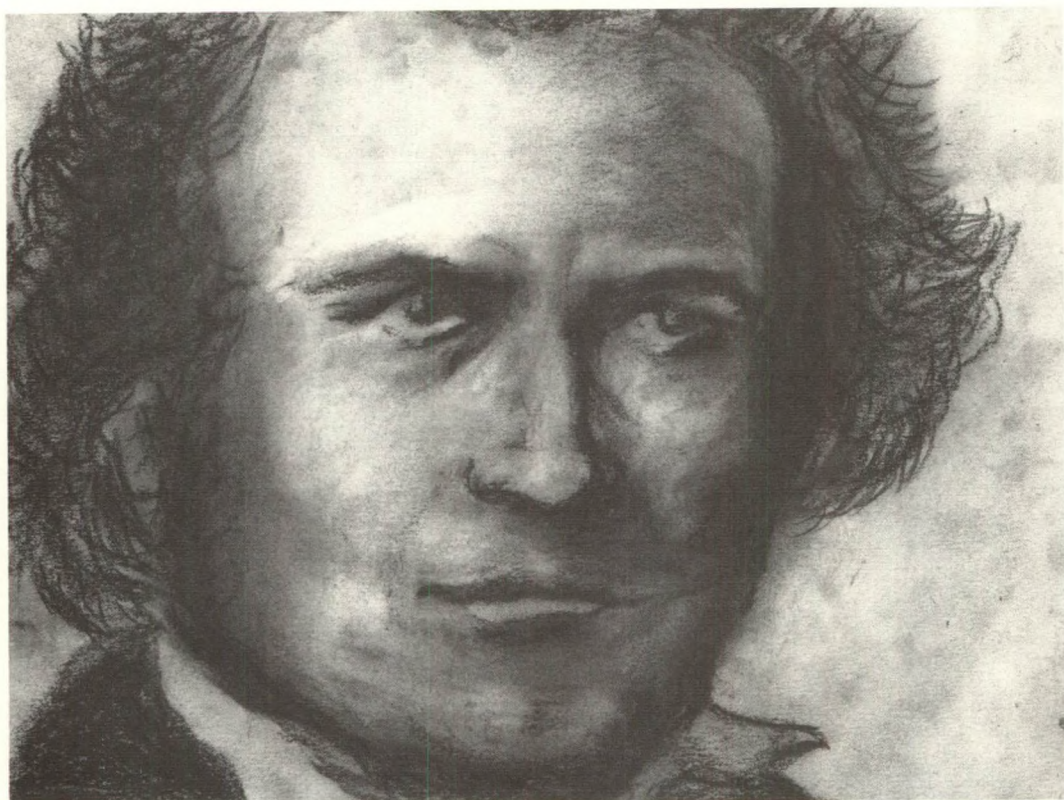
— *Lemuel Gilbert McClellan*

## Stray

Frost teases the  
February landscape,  
Bewildering inch-high  
tulip shoots  
that have felt the promise  
of green.  
Small white crystals lay upon  
lawns and cars  
like dust in an ancient house  
inhabited by ancient women.  
Doors still closed at  
five a.m.,  
the world's icy sheath  
appears seamless upon the  
unborn world. But  
up close,  
a tiny path has melted the dust,  
prints of five pads  
pressed upon the hood of a car.  
No longer an embryo,  
the grown stray  
hasn't been protected by the frost,  
but has been born  
into the cold of February,  
wishing with the tulips  
for Spring to melt the stinging hush  
of Winter before dawn.

— *Mary Ann Buschka*





— *George E. Micco*

# The Great Snake Tying Festival

*Lindamarie Sands*

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Every town at some point or another has a fair, but not one surrounds an event like the Great Snake Tying Contest of Indian Falls. Each year since 1865, the contest has been held on June 31, the anniversary of the day when local Civil War hero, Colonel Jimmy Ray Beauregard Jackson Pickett Sideburns had his big toe shot off by a cannonball. Legend has it that the suffering colonel's pain was so great that he snatched a particularly poisonous snake and tied it into an exact replica of General Lee's profile. Coincidentally, he saved the nearby sleeping general from being bitten by the snake and was awarded the silver cross. From that day on, the people of Indian Falls celebrate that amazing feat with snake tying tricks of their own.

As the sun rises over the Cowapache mountains, contestants gather from Pottericktock, Lymicksburg and Cheratop counties to enjoy the festivities. They meet at the mutilated foot of the statue of Colonel Sideburns. The strong jaw clenched in pain, the twirled mustache, and the bronze hands grasping the ten-foot snake, serve as inspiration to the hopeful snake tiers. Each of whom has his eye on the ultimate glory—the silver cross overlaid with a snake in the shape of General Lee's profile. This honor has been handed down for generations, and most families of the tri-county area can speak in glowing words of the time when the cross graced their family.

"I remember," says Luke Earl Saunders, "way back in '62 when my older brother, Lou Bob, won the great silver cross with the silver snake in the form of blessed General Lee's face, by tying a sweet two-year old blacksnake into a Gaelic cross. Our family has raised snakes just for the festival since the days when Indian Falls was just a backwater." Other fair-goers express similar sentiments.

Several divisions exist in snake tying competition. The first categories are poisonous and nonpoisonous, which are further divided into solitary and group. Single contestants get to tie their home-grown and specially trained snakes into knots. Their performance is judged on the basis of timing, originality, number of snake bites, and whoever is friends with the judges or has slipped them a prized pig. Cheating or doctoring snakes is strictly forbidden. "They're best all wriggling, anyway" says Ezra Tom Pound, the ninety-year-old, twelve-time champion. However, cheating has occurred in the past. Five years ago, Joe Jack "Skippy" Norton and his family were forever banned from the contest for greasing an opponent's snake. The following Sunday, they were driven out of town.

In group tying, several families compete against each other. As the mayor thrusts down the snake-knotted sword of Colonel Jimmy Ray Beauregard Jackson Pickett Sideburns, four members of each family prepare themselves and their snakes. At the signal, they hurriedly construct a prearranged pattern using all of the snakes. After a decent interval of time chosen by the judges and God Almighty (once it rained during the festivities), the Great Snake Bell is rung and the entries are judged. The competition has been particularly fierce of late. Last year's group award went to the Paul Nolan "Woodchuck" Alasky family for their thirty-second completion of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" with their three-year-old garter snakes, Mephistopheles, Minerva, Macavity, Micah, and Manure. This year, the Alasky's are favored to win again.

During the past ten years, organizers of the Snake Tying Festival have had to contend with outrage from the Humane Society, which claims that the contest is unfair to snakes. "How

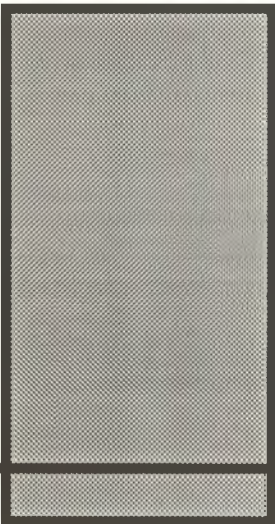
would you like someone to tie you in a knot?" asked one spokesperson to an amazed council of Indian Fallsers.

In reply, ten-time mayor and proprietor of the Fill'n Hole Bar and Cultural Museum, Tommy Roy "Flapjack" Wilson, voiced his opinion: "We can tie snakes into knots if we want to, just like the revered Colonel Jimmy Ray Beauregard Jackson Pickett Sideburns did. After all, the Good Lord told Adam and Eve to trample the serpent's head under their heels. Compared to that, there's nothing wrong with what we're doing." Fallsers murmured their support.

Each year, a few representatives are bused in by the Humane Society to picket the festival with their clapboards, but they have not yet dimmed the enthusiasm of the spectators, nor the participants. "It is too much a part of our cultural heritage," added the mayor of Indian Falls.

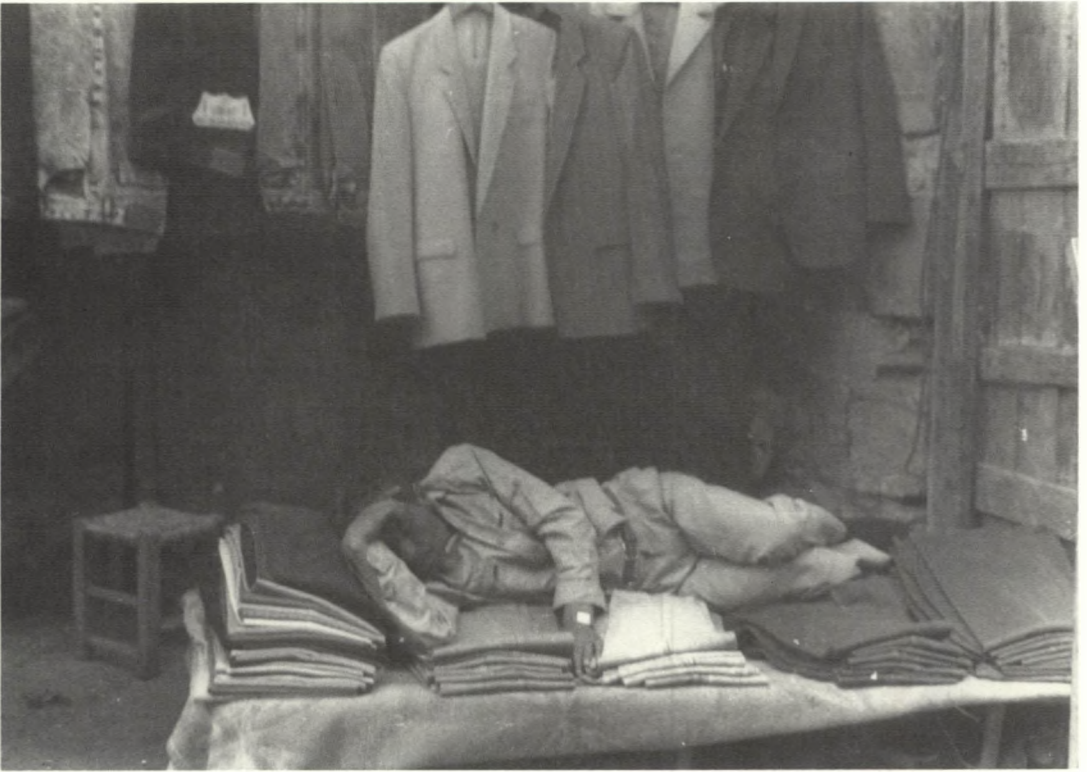
Mary Lynne Matilda Raines is the historian of Indian Falls. She claims that snake tying has been popular in the town since the days of the first settlers. She even maintains that the sport was practiced as a religious ritual by several Native-American cultures, which were indigenous to the tri-county area. "Around harvest time, the Wampapawne Indians would dress in feathers and pierce their noses with bones, then dance around a bonfire while waving snakes to warn off the evil spirit Bourbonanwhiskey. Of course, in the modern era, we're not that superstitious. We require a better reason for tying snakes, and the heroism of Colonel Sideburns provides it." Many Indian Fallsers scoff at her theories, but they are gaining more credence among the younger set.

The shade of the colonel would be pleased as all over Pottericktock, Lymicksburg, and Cheratop counties, the residents prepare for the coming Snake Tying Festival at Indian Falls. Dozens plan to do the hero honor. It is rumored that Myrna Rose Haxler-Hadyn and her sisters are preparing their prize-winning snakes to mimic the august form of Colonel Jimmy Ray Beaurogard Jackson Pickett Sideburns himself. Certainly they were eying the bronze carefully, as Mayor Wilson toasted the hero's memory with provided-at-low-cost-for-the-festival-spirits-to-honor-the-spirit-of-our-beloved-colonel from the casks of the Fill'n Hole Bar and Cultural Museum. Secret sources (the barmaid at the Fill'n Hole) report that the Seamus Webster-Willis's will train their three-year-olds to flatter Mayor Wilson and the rest of the judges. With industry and imagination, the Great Snake Tying Festival will continue to be great as Indian Falls brings it into the future.





## The Street Salesman



— *Virma Ugras*

The smell of my father  
is on me.  
Smoky, scratchy  
heavy-handed smell.  
Never had I believed his words:  
"some day, you'll understand..."

Now is some day, and  
the smell of my father  
is on me.

— *Michael Kmiec*



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